Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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Vol II, Issue No 21 September 1985

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

We start a new Volume and have a new Editor - good luck to them both!

These Presidential messages are written in agreement with our new Editor and for the next four issues will include the usual editorial comment and information.

Nos 1 to 20 of the Central American Newsletter have been bound together (192 pages in all) and a few copies are available at £10 (Overseas $15) post free. These contain a mass of useful and interesting information; orders with remittance please should be sent to our Editor - supplies are limited.

For the future I hope all members will actively support the Newsletter by writing to our Editor or to me with your comments, information, queries on items not fully understood or better still - articles, or notes for articles, for future publication. An ideal "New Volume Resolution" would be for every member to put pen to paper and write something on receipt of each number. Sharing of information, knowledge and material is what a Study Group is all about.

Spanish Main plans for the future are set out in detail in the August Mainsheet and include my Presidential show on 7th September, the Chile Group meeting on 5th October, the bi-annual auction on 30th November and the annual Spanish Main Cup on 15th December. All meetings will be held in the Allenby Room at the Victory Services Club, starting at 10.30 a.m. and finishing at approximately 4.00 p.m..

Material for the bi-annual auction should be in the hands of the Spanish Main secretary/ auctioneer - Brian Moorhouse (PO Box 3, BOURNE PE10 9RF) not later that 30th September. We hope as many of you as possible compete for the Spanish Main Cup; an entry form is in Mainsheet but if you have mislaid yours write to me for another one.

Next year a meeting has been planned to be held in Manchester on 5th April and a meeting of the Central American Study Group will be led by Dr Richard Saundry at the Victory Services Club on 17th May. Full details of both these meetings will be in the next Newsletter.

Finally, a happy new season to you and your collection.

52 St Leonards Road
NEWTON ABBOT
Devon TQ12 1JX

England

JOHN FOSBERY
President, The Spanish Main

COLLECT CHILE - but not a member of the Chile Group?

Send me a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a free sample copy of the Chile Newsletter, to see what you are missing. Please mark the SAE "Chile".

(Postage: 19p Europe & US, 44p air to US or $1) -Ed.

CAUSERIE

In response to Kilian Nathan's request for information (Issue 19) regarding his card with the JAMAICA TRANSIT marking, and his related pre-stamp entire, Mike Birks writes:-

Pre-stamp entire

Between November 1844 and November 1847 the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, based on the Dutch island of St Thomas, called monthly at Greytown, and carried the mails back to St Thomas via Kingston, Jamaica. The steamer "Reindeer", put into service on the Jamaica District in 1845, will have called at San Juan del Norte on 1st March, departing 3pm, and arriving Kingston at 11.00am on 4th March. (February being only 28 days the ship would be a day or so late, as it should have arrived on 3rd).

From Jamaica the letter was carried to St Thomas via Cuba and Haiti. At this time (1847) steamships were sailing twice monthly from Southampton, and this letter must have been part of the mail departing St Thomas on 21st March, and arriving in England 17 days later on 7th April (assuming the ships were on time). From there the letter was carried to France by the usual routes, arriving in Nevers 4 days later.

The postal stationery card

Presumably British packets ceased calling at San Juan del Norte when Nicaragua joined the UPU in 1882, and the British Agency closed. Consequently the card would have to travel to Corinto to pick up the San Francisco - Panama steamer, travel overland to the Caribbean coast, and then on to Kingston, Jamaica by British Packet.

The JAMAICA/TRANSIT marking was applied to mail carried by RMSPCo vessels, travelling between a British and a non-British territory, and as such probably indicated a claim to a portion of the postage. It is not a common marking, and is usually found on mail to the US from the Cayman and Turks Islands, and on mail from Panama and Puerto Rico to British Caribbean Islands.

During the period in question, there was no postal convention for the transmission of letters directly between San Juan del Norte and Cuba, although one for parcels did exist. Despite this, some "consignee mail" did pass between the two territories if a suitable ship was available. But not in this case. The card was carried by British steamer to New York, and then by a United States Lines ship to Cuba.

2001 The cover bearing a strike of "Steamer Connection" in our last issue, brought a response from Kilian Nathan, who writes:-

"This Airmail cover went by air to New York and (most probably) received there the handstamp "Steamer Connection", as in August 1942 no mail was transported (by air) any more from the U.S. to Europe, i.e. the letter was sent ex New York by "Steamer".

2101 From Kilian Nathan comes a marking of unknown origin. It may well be that the large taxmark "T" is not of Nicaraguan origin, but as it is usual for the country of despatch to apply such marks it is more likely to have been applied at Managua or possibly Corinto. Has nayone seen this marking before? Have they anything to add?

THREE UNUSUAL COSTA RICAN COVERS OF 1948 by RICHARD SAUNDRY

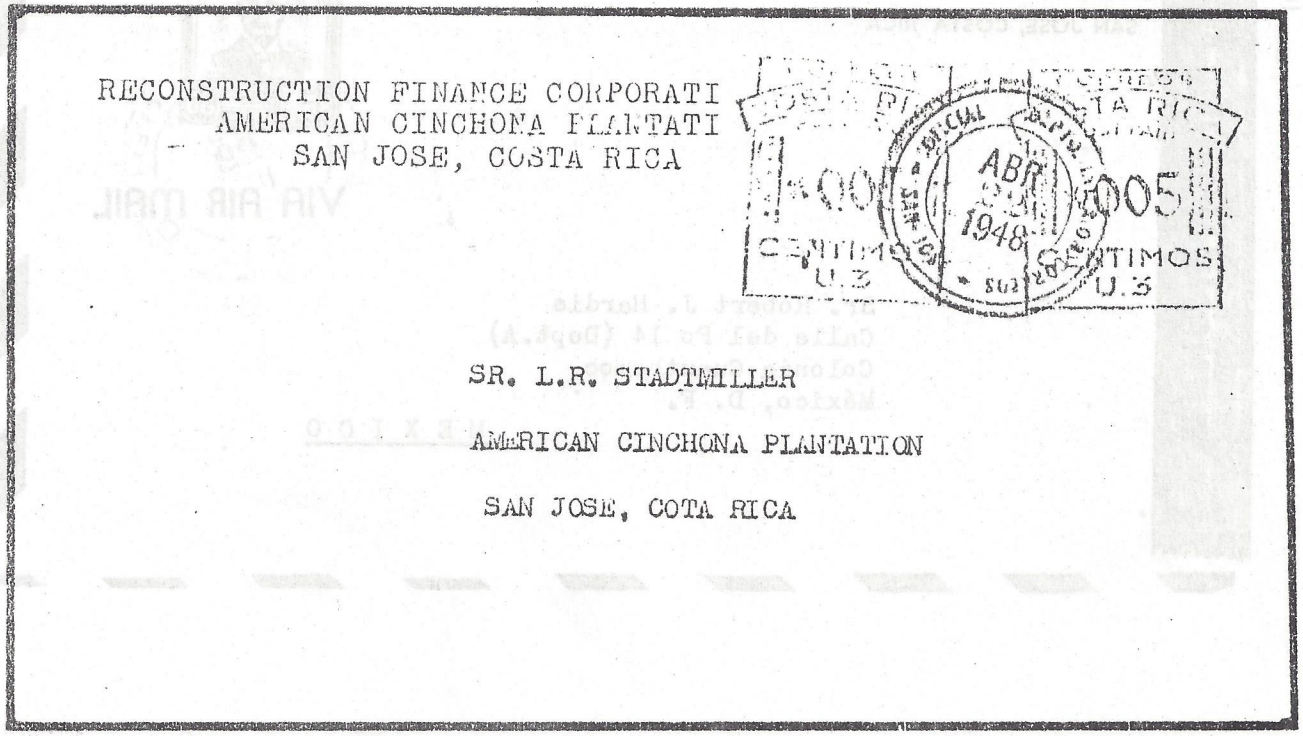
Costa Rica is often cited as a shining example of a stable democratic Latin American republic. In 1948, however, the country experienced a traumatic year when rent by a bloody civil war, and suffered additionally the experience of an armed invasion from Nicaragua. It is not too surprising therefore to find that genuine commercial Costa Rican covers from this period are few and far between, and three which have come into my possession are in my view, of more than passing interest.

To appreciate the significance of the covers it is necessary to familiarise oneself with the history of Costa Rica of this period. Briefly, Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, an extreme right wing politician won a landslide election as President in 1940, but during his term in office the country ran into severe economic problems resulting largely from World War II conditions and the attendant impossibility of exporting bananas. In order to survive he allied himself with the Communists, but remained sufficiently popular to ensure his protegé Teodoro Picado Michaliske won the presidential election of 1944. By the time that the 1948 elections were due the Calderón alliance was thoroughly discredited and the opposition achieved victory, but on 1 March Congress declared the election null and void and Picado refused to vacate the Presidency in favour of the winner Otilio Ulate Blanco. The upshot of the whole affair was that a revolution occurred led by Jose Figueres Ferrer. Limón fell to the revolutionary forces on 11 April, and by 19 April the capital, San José, was entirely surrounded by the revolutionary army. The result was a foregone conclusion; Picado fled to Nicaragua and the revolutionary troops entered San José 24 April. Possibly between two and four thousand lives were lost during the war. The second republic was founded and Figueres was elected President on 8 May.

On 1 December 1948 the Army was formally dissolved, and on 8 December were held new elections for the Constituent Assembly. On 10th reports were received that rebel forces under Calderón Guardia were entering the North West corner of Costa Rica with, it was believed, support from the Nicaraguan dictator, Somoza, plus some Nicaraguan troops; some fighting had already occurred in La Cruz in Guanacaste Province. On 14 December communication censorship was imposed. However on the same day largely due to the intervention of the Americans at the Coucil Meeting of the Organisation of American States, the protagonists were swiftly called to a halt. On 24 December the two countries were induced to sign a Pact of Unity. This was the first test of the newly formed OAS. Total Costa Rican losses in this minor war were seventeen soldiers killed.

My three covers are as follows:-

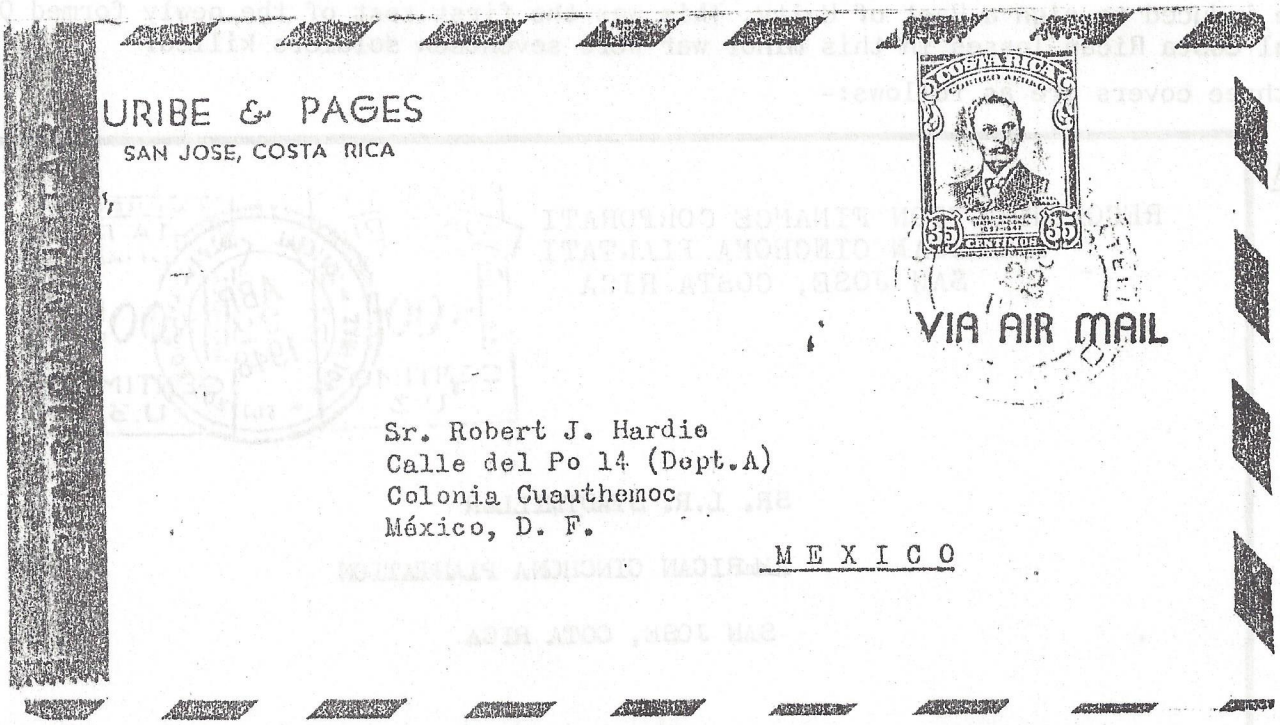
A



A A cover (possibly philatelic in nature) from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, American Cinchona Plantation, San José, to Mr Stadtmiller of the same company. This appears to be the same cover that was illustrated on the cover of the Pan American Philatelist Vol 3, No 1 (November 1956). Two indicia from meter franking machines have been cut out to be used in lieu of adhesive postage stamps of total franking of 10 ctmos. The meter impressions have been obliterated with a clear strike of the double circular date stamp "OFICIAL DEPTO. INTERIOR CORREOS/ABR 22 1948/SAN JOSE". On 22 April 1948, San Jose was completely surrounded by the revolutionary forces. I can add nothing further about this cover, but there are two questions I would like to ask:-
(1) Is this a philatelically contrived cover or is it genuinely commercially used?
(2) If it is genuine, why were normal adhesives not used? San José should have had more than sufficient supplies of adhesives. If there were shortages they would have been expected on the revolutionary side.

B A cover that is unsuitable for making a photocopy. It is simply a bisect of the 3 ctmos adhesive (SG 310a) intended for use on small covers sent at the visiting card rate. It is addressed to the Argentine Embassy in the city and the adhesive is cancelled with a poor strike of a single circular date stamp "CORREOS de COSTA RICA/DIC 17 1948/ CASSILLIERO SAN JOSE". This is presumably a drop-letter. It is surprising to find a bisect used on cover from Costa Rica in this period. Subsequent to joining the UPU in 1883 the use of bisected stamps in Costa Rica had been expressly forbidden. Again, was there a stamp shortage?

C A cover correctly rated airmail to Mexico with 35 ctmos adhesive clearly cancelled December 22nd 1948. On the left side of the envelope is an adhesive tape reading "CENSURA MILITAR" - obviously one of the covers sent under the emergency communications censorship imposed 14th December. The two questions I ask:-
(1) Can anyone provide further examples of use of the "CENSURA MILITAR" tape and at what date did censorship cease?
(2) I ask, tongue-in-cheek, how it was possible if the army had been abolished that one could still impose military censorship?



NICARAGUA: THE CENTENARY OF INDEPENDENCE SET

by MICHAEL P BIRKS

There is little doubt that the fight for independence in Central America was stimulated by the earlier success achieved by the United States in gaining its independence. Indeed the parallels are there to be seen; oppressive and unfair taxation from Europe.

One of the earliest signs of unrest in Nicaragua ocurred when the population in the area around Rivas declared independence from Spain and elected their own temporary government. Although short lived, this act was significant in that it gave inspiration to those who were to lead the movement to independence.

The break with Spain came finally in September 1821 with Guatemala, but just thirteen days later, Leon declared itself independent from Guatemala, whilst the other principal political group in Granada did not. It is this independence from Spain that was commemorated on 23rd December 1921 by a set of seven stamps. True independence did not happen until 1838, when Nicaragua broke from the Federal Republic of United Provinces, which was set up earlier.

The stamps were all recess printed by the American Bank Note Company on unwatermarked paper, and perforated 12. Like most of the issues supplied to the country, the values bear no relation to postal requirements, but are simply convenient values.

Three values depict men who were Presidents over Nicaragua, such as Manuel José Arce, who was in fact President of Central America between 1823 and 1828, and is depicted on the ½c. Fruto Chamorro (1853-4) and later Pedro Joaquín Chamorro (1875-9), are depicted on the 5c and 25c values. Four members of that family were elected to the Presidency between 1853 and 1921, which is probably why they are depicted on the stamps; Diego Chamorro was President in 1921! Their rise to fame probably owes itself to the fact that the Chamorros were an old Granada Conservative family, and as was often the case, it is not necessarily what you know but .....

Miguel Larreinaga featured on the 2c, was a distinguished Nicaraguan associated with the independence movement. He was generally regarded as a steadying influence on the Junta Provisional Consultiva, formed immediately following the break with Spain.

The 10c value depicts Maximo Jerez, whose name is associated with the Cañaz-Jerez treaty. This treaty with Costa Rica, signed April 15th 1858 settled the boundary dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, which had arisen in connection with the transit concessions eight years earlier.

José Cecilio del Valle, featured on the 1c value, is the mystery man in this set. For such an important set it seems strange to have chosen someone who is so obscure. I am reasonably sure that this man has no connection with the José Vallé associated with William Walker, as he is described as being "a pure Indian of vast bulk". So who is he? Perhaps some reader can enlighten us.

Finally the 50c depicts probably the most famous Nicaraguan, Ruben Dario. Born Felix Ruben Garcia y Sarmienta, he rose to fame as the greatest Spanish speaking poet of all time, being described by one writer as "The Shakespeare of the Spanish speaking peoples". His life has been well documented elsewhere, and whilst not involved with the events of 1821 (he was born in 1867) certainly deserves the place of honour in this set.

One discrepancy remains to be resolved regarding this set. Gibbons give the date of issue as 23rd December 1921, but Stanley Daft in his paper to the Royal stated that ".. it being believed that they were only placed on sale for one day, probably 15th September, 1921". Used copies with clear dates are scarce, and it would be very interesting to know if an example exists postmarked before Gibbons "first day".

COSTA RICA: THE SURFACE POSTAL RATES 1883 - c1940

by RICHARD SAUNDRY

A good place to begin compiling a list of postal rates for Costa Rica is to begin with the rates that were in force when Costa Rica became a full member of the UPU in 1883. The rates were formally summarised in decree No. XI of 18 February 1884 which was signed by the President, Prospero Fernandez, the Postmaster General, M G Escalante and Bernardo Soto, at that time Secretary of State. Briefly, restricting our attention to those rates which are most frequently met with by postal historians, the internal (domestic) letter rate was set at 5 ctvs, and the foreign letter rate (to UPU countries) at 10 ctvs. For both these classes of letters the rates applied with weight steps of 15g, so that with each additional 15g weight or fraction thereof the rates were increased proportionately. Thus the rates for foreign letters would be 10 ctvs, 20 ctvs, 30 ctvs, 40 ctvs etc.. In addition to the foreign rates adhesives could be added to pay for the foreign (external) registration rate of a further 10 ctvs, or 15 ctvs for the registration rate including the advice of receipt (A.R) service. Thus a letter to a foreign address rated at 35 ctvs was almost certainly a double-weight letter (20 ctvs) with A.R registration (15 ctvs). Apparently at this time (1883) the registration service was available for domestic letters gratis.

At the time of preparing these notes I cannot find reference to a decree establishing the rates for postcards as they were not mentioned in the original list of tarifs. However it is obvious that from the beginning of 1884 when the first postal stationery cards were issued, and which were designed primarily for internal use, that the domestic postcard rate was set at 2 ctvs. Such cards addressed to foreign destinations invariably bear an additional 1 ctvo adhesive from which we can deduce the current foreign postcard rate was set at 3 ctvs.

It was further decreed that letters and card etc. sent to addresses in Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua should be rated as if they were domestic mail.

In this period the world economies were relatively stable with the happy result that postal tarifs rarely changed, and the Costa Rican postal rates of 1883 remained effective for over 20 years.

In 1910 the currency changed from 100 centavos to the peso, to 100 centimos to the colon.

On 22 January 1903 in Decree No. 122 the foreign postcard rate was raised from 3 ctms to 4 ctms in accordance with the provisions of Article IV of the Regulations of the UPU. At, or about the same time the first and only registry envelope made its appearance bearing an embossed 20 ctms stamp. This was in a form that was almost identical to that issued by Chile in 1900 which was not too surprising since both came from the Waterlow stable. This was intended for foreign registered letters since the 20 ctms stamp covered the foreign letter rate plus registration. Unfortunately these envelopes were manufactured from heavy "cheesecloth" paper accounting for most of the first weight step, so that most surviving used examples bear additional adhesives.

In 1917 there was a flat fifty per cent increase in all foreign rates with the result that the postcard rate went up to 6 ctms and the letter rate to 15 ctms, with the registration and "A.R" rates remaining as before. These new rates remained in force for several years. Following the UPU meeting of 1920 however, the foreign postcard rate was raised to 12 ctms.

1921 saw the adoption of the Spanish American Postal Union whereby letters could be exchanged between Latin American countries, Spain, and the United States at the prevailing domestic rates. Thus from 1921 letters and cards could be sent from Costa Rica to the United States at 5 ctms and 4 ctms respectively. On 1 December 1921 the foreign first class rate for letters to UPU countries was raised to 20 ctms and from this date onwards letters with European addresses are rated thus.

In October 1924 domestic rates were again increased. The new postcard rate was set at 5 ctms, and the letter rate at 10 ctms.

At some stage around 1929 the domestic letter rate was increased to 13 ctms, but on 9 July 1931 this reverted to 10 ctms. From 1930 onwards special foreign airmail rates were introduced. These schedules are extremely complicated and lie outside the scope of

these present notes, but it is worth recording here that until 19 September 1932 all foreign airmail letters had to bear adhesives for the foreign surface rates in addition to those for the prevailing airmail rates. The UPU letters bore the 20 ctms adhesives, whereas letters to the USA bore adhesives to 13 ctms up to June 1931, and afterwards 10 ctms.

Essentially the surface rates were retained until the Second World War period when in 1940 the domestic letter rate was increased from 10 ctms to 15 ctms.

I am not at present absolutely sure what the prevailing registry rates were throughout this period as very little has apparently appeared in the philatelic literature on the subject. The evidence for the registry rates I have gleaned from examples in my own collection. Up until at least 1920 the registration rate of 10 ctms was current. I have several examples from 1930 onwards clearly indicating a domestic registration rate of 30 ctms, a foreign registration rate of 35 ctms, and a foreign "A.R" rate of 50 ctms. These rates lasted until at least 1939. The evidence for the intervening period (1920-1930) is lacking. Several letters of the 1927/1928 period suggest a domestic registration rate of 20 ctms, a foreign registration rate of 25 ctms, and an "A.R" rate of 45 ctms.

If anyone can throw further light on the registration rates between 1920 and 1930, I for one would be most grateful. Can anyone supply dates for the changes? If anyone has a Costa Rican registered letter in this period it should well repay close examination in light of the possible current postal rates.

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A BRIEF REPORT ON THE PRESIDENTIAL SEQUENCES IN NICARAGUA FROM 1931 TO 1979

by CYRIL WOODTLI (continued from Issue 11 pp 2-3)

When General Moncada was elected President, in 1931, he took as vice-President Dr Enoc Aguado F, a Liberal like himself. However after the earthquake, the country was faced with so many problems that it became evident that General Moncada could not cope. The American Minister approached Dr Aguado to find out whether he would take over the Presidency if the U.S. were to support him. This he refused to do, since General Moncada was the legally elected President, and he would not betray him. Consequently Moncada continued in office until the elections, supervised by the U.S. Marines, when Dr Juan Bautista Sacasa was elected. Sacasa continued in office until the end of his term in 1936, when the new President elected was General Anastasio Somoza, known as Tacho Somoza. He had two sons, Luis and Anastasio (Tachito).

On his accession to the Presidency, Tacho Somoza had the Constitution altered, extending his term of office from four years to six, and also re-worded so that, if anything should happen to him during his period of office, his son was to take over and finish his term as President. The existing law prevented a President from running for a second consecutive period in office, but he overcame this by means of electing stooges. Thus he continued to control the government, maintaining control from 1937 to 1956, when he was assassinated on 29 September. His son Luis took over and finished the term, and in the next elections was re-elected. Ill health meant that he had to hand over to Tachito in 1963, and he managed to keep himself there until he was finally driven out by the revolution in 1979. He went to live in Miami, and later Ascuncion, Paraguay, where he was assassinated on 17 September 1980.

The Somoza family remained in office from 1937 to 1979, in effect, either by physically occupying the Presidency, or introducing "front men" such as Arguello in 1947, or Gutierrez in 1963. During these 42 years they amassed a huge fortune by dubious means, both in Nicaragua and overseas. It is claimed that they owned about half the country, and had shares in almost every profitable business in Nicaragua. Finally of course, the people rebelled and Tachito Somoza and his family were forced to flee. I believe that all his property in Nicaragua has been confiscated by the State, and the "Day of Liberation" is proclaimed as being 19 July 1979.

The country is now run by a National Committee, and one of the principal members was, I believe, the wife of Dn Pedro Joaquin Chomorro, who was the editor of the Conservative newspaper "La Prensa", who, having printed some criticism of the Government, was shot in the street. It was this act which sparked off the revolution which finally forced Somoza to flee.

The writer lived in Nicaragua from 1924 to 1932, throughout the period of the revolution and the earthquake, and was personally acquainted with most of the individuals primarily concerned with the events related. He would be pleased to correspond with anyone seeking further information.

SPANISH MAIN Annual subscription £5 (UK), £6 (Europe), $15 (elsewhere) The subscription includes four copies of MAINSHEET, and also private treaty lists and auction catalogues.

Secretary: Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 3, BOURNE PE10 9RF, UK

The society also runs two specialised groups, the Central American and the Chile groups. The subscription to each group is £3 (UK) or $7 elsewhere, to Spanish Main members, or $10 to non-members (Overseas subscriptions only). This includes four copies of the respective Newsletter, by airmail.

THE POSTCARD PAGE by MICHAEL P BIRKS

Two cards which came into my possession within a week of each other, from different sources are shown below. The cards depict the National Palace in Managua and the Cathedral at Leon, and provide a wonderful introduction to the definitives issued in 1914.

The cards were published by HSM (about whom I know nothing) and are numbered 1851 and 1837 respectively. What is particularly interesting is that the card showing the Cathedral exists with two different styled inscriptions, suggesting two printings. A card showing the waterfront at Corinto can also be found with different styled titles.

Recuerdos de Nicaragua. *Catedral de Leon.*

TWO NICARAGUAN PAQUEBOT ENTIRES by KILIAN NATHAN

Kilian Nathan sends us illustrations of two paquebot entires in his collection. The first he describes as "a gem", being an 1893 postal stationery envelope, addressed to Paris, and cancelled with the oval handstamp of the Purser of the SS Colon, of the Pacific Mail Steam Ship Company, dated 10 April 1893. The cover is backstamped at Panama on 15 April, and bears a French Paquebot cancel of 22 April. It arrived in Paris on 16 May, which makes a transit time of about 5 weeks in all.

This second entire is also a postal stationery item, this time a 2c card of 1895 uprated with a 1c adhesive for overseas use. The card is addressed to Altona in Germany, and was posted in Managua on 18 June 1895. It passed through Corinto the following day, and although not backstamped Panama, it must certainly have crossed the isthmus there. The French Paquebot cancel of 3 July and arrival postmark of 27 July, give again a transit time of about 5 weeks.

Via Corinto y Panamá
REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA
TARJETA POSTAL
Don Roberto Pütz
Altona, Elbe
Alemania
Nota: Escribir la direccion solamente en este lado, y el mensaje en el otro.